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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6050

November 3, 2011

RICHARD D. D∈BOBES, STAFF DIRECTOR DAVID M. MORRISS, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

The Honorable Leon E. Panetta Secretary of Defense 1000 Defense Pentagon Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Panetta:

We continue to believe that the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction offers the best chance to identify the minimum of \$1.2 trillion dollars in spending reductions over 10 years mandated by the Budget Control Act of 2011. The possibility of failure to meet that goal, however, would lead to a draconian sequester of an additional \$600 billion in defense spending in addition to the more than \$450 billion that has already been imposed on the Department of Defense. These cuts are being proposed in addition to the \$178 billion in spending reductions and efficiencies taken by former Secretary of Defense Gates over the next five-year defense plan.

The Department of Defense must reduce wasteful spending, however the impact of a combined \$1.1 trillion in cuts to defense spending over 10 years as a result of sequester has been described by you as having "devastating effects" on the Department of Defense and our national security. We could not agree more and fear the results of sequester will be a hollow military. Further, in testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, you said that allowing sequester to occur would be "shooting ourselves in the head." What is lacking from these characterizations, however, is a frank and honest assessment describing in concrete terms what defense spending cuts of this magnitude would entail.

As you know, we are approaching the statutory deadline on November 23 for the Select Committee to report its recommendations, which will be followed by only a month of consideration by both Houses of Congress before those recommendations must be voted on without amendment by both chambers. Action in Congress must be followed by enactment into law by January 15, 2012, to avoid sequestration that would go into effect in January 2013. Given these looming deadlines, we believe it is imperative that the Congress be fully informed of the effects of a sequester on our military.

Therefore, we ask that you describe the specific options and types of actions the Department would be required to take should a sequester result from a failure of the Select Committee to reach agreement. Congress must be fully informed regarding the contemplated actions of the Department that may be necessary to implement a sequester. In order for the Congress to do its job, we cannot wait until December or later to receive specific and concrete information.

While we understand that sequester is not a foregone conclusion, and that no specific implementation of such drastic reductions has yet been decided or required, we strongly believe that Congress and the American people must be made fully aware, in concrete terms, of the scale and scope of potential harm that a sequester would impose. Given that no one plan or response has yet been adopted, we ask that your response include the range of options under consideration, knowing that a specific outcome cannot be predicted at this time.

We believe that protecting our national security is the first and highest priority of any government. We ask that you join us in making clear how much our political, economic, and national security rest on the foundation of the men and women of the Department of Defense.

Sincerely,

Lindsey O. Graham United States Senator

John McCain

United States Senator